

Mercy Corps
Youth and Conflict
Toolkit



Photograph: Thomas Cook for Mercy Corps

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Mercy Corps

Youth and Conflict

Approach and Overview of Toolkit



Photograph: Ben Depp for Mercy Corps

Youth and Conflict Approach

Youth are often seen as the promise for tomorrow, the ones who will transform their communities and the world into a more secure, productive and just place. However, societies with a high proportion of young people relative to the total population (i.e., a youth bulge) are at a greater risk for violent conflict, particularly in places where there are few or deteriorating economic opportunities.¹ Mercy Corps believes that young people have the ability to positively transform societies. To help harness this ability, we design programs by first identifying the factors that often lead youth to become involved in conflict, and then design and implement programs that address these causes by providing youth constructive alternatives to creating change in their societies.

Youth tend to resort to violence because they lack a hope for the future. They may have few economic opportunities, even when they achieve a good education. As traditional structures do not usually foster youth engagement in local and national decision-making processes, their voices may not be heard by political elites. Conflict often severs young people's ties with communities and other youth, creating a sense of loss and lack of belonging. Delays in the transition to adulthood (marriage, full-time employment, etc) keep young people in low status positions. Of particular concern is when these gaps in economics, politics and civil society provide opportunities for extremist groups to manipulate these grievances as a way to recruit youth into violent activities.

These factors — lack of political and economic engagement, community tensions and disenfranchisement — combined with the youth bulge, contribute to youth violence. Consequently, it is critical for youth

¹ Urdal, Henrik (2004). *The Devil in the Demographics: The Effect of Youth Bulges on Domestic Armed Conflict, 1950-2000*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

programming to provide young people with ways to increase their economic livelihoods, engage in political participation and connect with their communities as a means to thwart negative influences that drive youth to participate in violence.

Recognizing the diversity of factors that drive youth to engage in violence, Mercy Corps' youth and conflict programs address the needs of youth across a multitude of sectors:

Economic Engagement

A depressed economy and attaining a high level of education without employment opportunities are potential risk factors that push youth towards violence.² Without employment opportunities, youth remain idle, become frustrated, and are vulnerable to political elites and violent groups that promise financial reward. This lack of economic opportunity combined with post-election tensions manipulated by political elites provoked youth violence in Kenya in 2007. Mercy Corps' Local Empowerment for Peace program improves the economic situation of Kenyan youth through microenterprise and livelihoods programs, thereby reducing the likelihood that elites will be able to mobilize them for future violence.

Political Participation

In assessments from Yemen, Kosovo, Kenya, Pakistan and Kashmir, young people express deep frustration with their government and the lack of opportunities have to influence local, regional and national decision-making. This is even true in countries where Ministry of Youth and National Youth Policies exist. Additionally, corruption and a high degree of nepotism in government circles contribute to young people's disenchantment with political processes, and limits their desire to become civically engaged. This lack of a youth voice in government processes was a main cause of violence among youth in Timor Leste. Mercy Corps' Youth for All (Y4A) program addresses youth discontent by building the capacity of youth representatives to influence local decision-makers and strengthening ties between youth and local government.

Youth-to-Adult and Youth-to-Youth Connections

While many approaches to combating youth violence focus on grievances and structural factors (i.e., push factors), young people's networks and ideologies may be more powerful predictors in terms of who joins violent groups.³ Moreover, in many conflict environments youth are segregated by race, ethnicity, religion or tribe and rarely interact with youth from other backgrounds, making it difficult to combat the stereotypes and prejudices political elites and militant groups manipulate to garner support, as we have seen in Sri Lanka, Kyrgyzstan, and Kenya. To build constructive networks with their communities and with other youth, Mercy Corps integrates young people into community development projects and designs programs that bring youth together across conflict lines, such as in the Youth Initiatives for Peace and Reconciliation program in Nepal. Additionally, in the Engaging Youth for Stable Yemen program, we support young people in developing mentoring relationships with adults who can help them gain status by transitioning successfully into adulthood.

² Ibid. However, recent research by Chris Blattman and Eli Berman raises questions about this link. We are currently examining the conditions under which this link is strongest. .

³ For example, Humphries and Weinstein (2008) found in Sierra Leone that whether your friends were part of militant movements made it more likely that you would join. Humphreys, Macartan and Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Who Fights? The Determinants of Participation in Civil War*, American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 52, No. 2, April 2008, p.447. See also Horgan, James (2008). From Profiles to Pathways and Roots to Routes: Perspectives from Psychology on Radicalization into Terrorism. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 618, No. 1, 80-94; USAID (2007) Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism.

Cross-Sectoral Approach

The factors that lead to youth violence rarely work in isolation from one other. Rather, they tend to interact, which can lead to an exacerbation of violence. In Kenya, the lack of youth's political voice combined with few economic opportunities enabled political elites to recruit youth into the post-electoral violence. Recognizing the connection amongst these different factors, Mercy Corps employs a cross-sectoral approach to our youth and conflict programming. An example of this multi-faceted approach is the Support for Kosovo's Young Leaders program. In this program youth receive job training and are placed into internships in the private and public sectors. Additionally, youth work together on joint projects that solidify relationships with each other, their communities and across ethnic lines. By working to increase engagement in the economic sector, the public sector and civil society simultaneously, Mercy Corps aims to comprehensively address the factors that contribute to youth violence.

Youth and Conflict Toolkit

The CMG team developed a number of tools to help field offices and program teams develop and implement programs that aim to reduce young people's participation in violence. The tools are largely organized according to the reasons youth participate in violence: Economic Engagement, Political Participation, Youth-to-Community Connections and Youth-to-Youth Connections. The toolkit includes:

- Youth and Conflict Theories of Change: A description of how we believe our interventions create change in the communities where we work.
- Youth and Conflict Indicator Menu: Including indicators for outputs, outcomes and impacts.
- Youth and Conflict Best Practices: A summary of best practices and lessons learned from Mercy Corps, other agencies, donors and researchers.
- Youth Conflict Management Curriculum and Facilitators Manual: Synthesizing and adapting CMG tools for younger populations, we put together a conflict management manual for our youth programs. The manual brings together the Program for Young Negotiation, the YIPR and LINCS peacebuilding manuals, the MC Staff Development Negotiation and Communication Manual: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/goindex?c=progdev&q=Subject::Youth::Training,CurriculumWorkshopMaterials::YouthCurriculum::ConflictManagement>. We also integrated these lessons into the Sports for Change curriculum used in Kenya and Sri Lanka: <https://clearspace.mercycorps.org/docs/DOC-9898>. Included in the toolkit is a summary of all 10 lessons.
- Youth and Conflict Assessment: A sample Focus Group Discussion Guide used in Pakistan, but can easily be adapted to a number of countries looking to explore youth and conflict programming.
- Youth and Conflict Fact Sheet: A two-page summary of successes in various Mercy Corps Youth and Conflict programs.

Current and Past Youth and Conflict Programs

The programs listed below either mainly focus on youth or have a significant youth component. To date, Mercy Corps has implemented 29 youth and conflict programs with a total budget of over \$47 million.

Region	Country	Program	Year & Duration	Budget
Africa	Kenya	Local Empowerment for Peace (LEAP)	2009-2010 18 months	\$600,000
		LEAP II	2010-2011 18 months	\$1,700,000
		LEAP Sport	2010-2011 18 months	\$169,325
	Sudan	Sports for Peace and Life I & II	2006-2008 22 months	\$888,416
		Improving the Psychosocial and Social Well-being of IDPs	2005-2006 16 months	\$237,631
	Somalia	Promoting Peace and Reconciliation	2006-2008 18 months	\$699,447
	Liberia	Youth Education for Life Skills I & II	2004-2006 30 months	\$2,744,757
	Ethiopia	Strengthening Institutions for Peace and Development (SIPED)	2009-2012 36 months	\$6,800,000
Uganda	Youth Empowerment Program	2008-2011 36 months	\$ 212,785	
Asia	Kashmir	Relationships and Alliances for Transformation	2010-2011 9 months	\$150,000
	Nepal	Youth Initiatives for Peace and Reconciliation	2006-2008 24 months	\$600,581
		Inspiring Nepal to Support Peace Initiatives and Reconciliation Education	2007-2008 14 months	\$22,212
	Sri Lanka	Enhanced Capacity for Relationship Building among Indigenous Actors Sport	2009-2010 12 months	\$50,000
	Timor Leste	Youth for All	2008-2009 18 months	\$468,000
Engage: Civic Education for East Timorese Youth		2004-2008 44 months	\$754,896	
Middle East	Iraq	Why Not Youth Cross Cultural Exchange	2008-2009 12 months	\$1,300,000
		Supporting Effective Advocacy for Marginalized Groups (SEAM)	2009-2012 30 months	\$ 4,710,900
	West Bank/Gaza	Youth Beyond Borders Internet Exchange	2007-2008 24 months	\$250,000
	Yemen	Engaging Youth for a Stable Yemen	2010-2012 24 months	\$1,200,000
	Lebanon	Center for Excellence	2006-2007 8 months	\$250,000
		Psychosocial and Livelihood Assistance for Palestinian Youth	2009-2010 14 months	\$882,000
Supporting Youth Advocacy Program		2008-2008 6 months	\$240,000	
Eurasia	Tajikistan	Tajikistan Conflict Prevention Program	2004-2006 26 months	\$1,288,161
		Tajikistan Stability Enhancement Program	2009-2012 34 months	\$7,100,000
	Kyrgyzstan	University Sport Project for Osh Regional Tolerance	2004-2005 15 months	\$94,419
		Collaborative Development Initiative	2005-2008 36 months	\$2,549,803
	Kosovo	Youth Employment and Participation	2010-2015 60 months	\$3,100,000
		Support for Kosovo's Young Leaders	2008-2011 36 months	\$2,500,00
		Youth Voice Project	2005-2006 14 months	\$184,455
	Ferghana Valley Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan & Uzbekistan	Peaceful Communities Initiative	2001-2007 77 months	\$6,203,769
		Community Action Investment Program	2002-2005 36 months	\$11,806,744
	Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Armenia	Momentum	2005-2008 36 months	\$1,000,000

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Youth and Conflict

Theories of Change



Photograph: Cassandra Nelson/Mercy Corps

“When young people are uprooted, jobless, intolerant, alienated, and have few opportunities for positive engagement, they represent a ready pool of recruits for groups seeking to mobilize violence”
- USAID Youth and Conflict Toolkit¹

Introduction

Numerous hypotheses (or theories) populate the literature as to why young people participate in violent movements. Mercy Corps Conflict Management Group identifies the theories of change for why young people become involved in violent conflict either in the proposal design process by examining up-to-date research in the conflict and peacebuilding field or after the design phase, by examining the goals, activities and objectives outlined by the program proposal and logframe. A theory of change is developed for each objective and describes how programming will contribute to the achievement of that objective and how that objective will contribute to the achievement of the goal. Our theories of change below illustrate the ways in which Mercy Corps programs can make a difference in the lives of vulnerable youth, working towards the goal of reducing youth involvement in conflict.

¹ USAID, *Youth and Conflict Toolkit*, 2005, Page 2. http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/conflict/publications/docs/CMM_Youth_and_Conflict_Toolkit_April_2005.pdf

Employment and Income Generation

Theory of Change 1: If young people are employed, then they will be less likely to join violent movements for economic gain.²

Young people are more likely to be unemployed compared to adults, making them more likely to join militant groups for financial reasons.³ Militant groups offer income through wages or gains secured through looting and this can satisfy the youths' desire to provide for their families and communities. To reduce this vulnerability, our programs provide young people with the skills and opportunities to secure livelihoods, generate income and find employment, giving them hope for a viable economic future without the need for militant involvement.⁴ For example, an integral component of Kenya's Local Empowerment for Peace program is the creation of 15 Cash-for-Work sites by youth self-help groups.

Relevant Mercy Corps' Programs:

- Kenya Local Empowerment for Peace (LEAP)
- Uganda Youth Empowerment Program (YEP)
- Ethiopia Strengthening Institutions for Peace and Development (SIPED)
- Tajikistan Stability Enhancement Program (TSEP)

Theory of Change 2: If young people find meaningful employment, then they will be less likely to participate in violent movements as a way to gain respect and self-fulfillment.

In some cases, young people do not participate in violence for only financial reasons alone. They also want to feel powerful and know they are making a meaningful contribution. For many young people, their self-worth is tied to their work. This is particularly true for highly educated youth in places like Kosovo, Kashmir, Pakistan and West Bank/Gaza. Therefore, Mercy Corps' youth programming works to connect youth with a job that meets their emotional needs as well as their financial needs. Furthermore, this sense of professional fulfillment may also be attained when youth are able to use skills that they value and have strengthened through school or training. In Kosovo, Mercy Corps trains young people in entrepreneurship and business skills and helps youth find internships opportunities to gain experience and further pursue their interests in business, government and social service.

Relevant Mercy Corps' Programs:

- Kosovo Skills for Kosovo's Young Leaders (SKYL)
- West Bank/Gaza: Securing Future
- Yemen Engaging Youth for a Stable Yemen (EYSY)
- Kashmir Relationships and Alliances for Transformation (RAFT)

² Note, recent research by Eli Berman, Joseph Felter and Jacob Shapiro show little support for this hypothesis, at least in terms of insurgencies. Similar results are starting to emerge from Liberia and Uganda as well. It's not clear whether employment may be more relevant in cases where there are blips of violence, like in Kenya and Kyrgyzstan, as compared to intractable conflicts.

³ According to USAID Youth and Conflict Toolkit, (P.4) "Typically, youth unemployment is over three times as high as adult unemployment in developing countries and in countries with stagnant economies, that proportion can be far higher (ILO 2002). For example, it is five times higher in Sri Lanka and seven in Egypt."

⁴ Kemper, Yvonne. *Berghof Report No. 10: Youth in Approaches of War-to-Peace Transitions*. Berghof Research Center. January 2005.

Theory of Change 3: If livelihood opportunities for youth are strengthened and diversified, then the competition for scarce resources will be reduced and stability will increase.

Communities are more stable when people do not have to compete for scarce economic resources and livelihoods. Young people are often at an elevated risk for competition in instances where they are joining an already saturated market. If youth do have to compete, one of two situations may occur: 1) conflict may erupt over the scarce resources or 2) youth may migrate for jobs elsewhere, often causing community fragmentation and future difficulty in reintegration. Furthermore, youth who migrate to urban areas may fall prey to negative influences including violence.⁵ Also, when youth attempt to earn an income through a livelihood that many others rely on, it may lead to a depletion of resources, at the cost of environmental damage and increased resource competition. Mercy Corps alleviates this pressure by diversifying livelihoods diversification through expanding and building markets, establishing value chains, and entrepreneurship opportunities (including training and access to credit), all targeted towards youth.⁶

Relevant Mercy Corps' Programs:

- Uganda Building Bridges to Peace (BBP)
- Ferghana Valley Community Action Investment Program (CAIP)
- Kenya LEAP
- Tajikistan TSEP

Political Participation

Theory of Change 4: If young people feel they have constructive avenues for political participation, then they are less likely to turn to violence to promote political objectives.

Young people are more likely to be manipulated by violent groups or political elites advocating violence, if they feel they can not influence political processes. When youth feel that no political group represents them, they are alienated from the existing system and become likely candidates for insurgent groups. According to research conducted among disenfranchised youth, those who did not support any political party were two to three times more likely to join violent movements, voluntarily or involuntarily.⁷ Mercy Corps addresses these vulnerabilities by working with both youth leaders and political leaders to recognize the importance of youth involvement in political processes, increasing the capacity of youth councils, and supporting youth-government dialogues.

Relevant Mercy Corps' Programs:

- Timor Leste Engage and Youth for All (Y4A)
- Kosovo SKYL, Youth Voice, Youth Employment and Participation (YEP)
- Kashmir RAFT

⁵ ICG report 162 (2009). On the Road to Failure.

⁶ Mercy Corps, *Sustainability Field Study: Understanding What Promotes Lasting Change at the Community Level*, Mercy Corps, December 2007, P. 33. <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/Docs/SustainabilityFieldStudyFinal.pdf>

⁷ Humphreys and Weinstein conducted research among ex-combatants and non-combatants from Sierra Leone and they tested several hypotheses on why people fight. One of their hypotheses looked at alienated youth from mainstream political processes and whether they were more likely to participate in insurgent groups or not. Their found supporting evidence to show that in fact there is a relationship between youth alienated from the political system and turning to violence. For more information: Humphreys, Macartan & Jeremy Weinstein, *Who Fights? The Determinants of Participation in Civil War*, American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 52, No. 2, April 2008, p.447. http://www.stanford.edu/~jweinst/files/AJPS_2008.pdf

Community Engagement

Theory of Change 5: If young people collaborate on initiatives that contribute to the protection and development of their communities, then they will become more connected to and be respected by their communities.

Young people need to feel a sense of belonging. If they feel isolated or marginalized from their families, communities and societies, they are more likely to find that sense of belonging from 'negative' external forces (i.e., militant groups, extremist religious leaders, drugs). To reduce the probability of youth joining violent groups, Mercy Corps integrates youth into communities by including them within Community Action Groups and creating opportunities for young people and communities to collaborate in the implementation of community infrastructure projects.

Relevant Mercy Corps' Programs:

- Kosovo SKYL and YEP
- Nepal Youth Initiatives for Peace and Reconciliation (YIPR)
- Tajikistan Conflict Prevention Program (TCPP)
- Liberia Youth Education for Life Skills (YES)

Theory of Change 6: If young people are mentored by positive role models who help them transition from youth to adulthood, then they will develop a sense of purpose in their lives.

Personal relationships play an important role in shaping young people's identities, convictions, and belief systems, especially as youth transition into adulthood. Young people who lack positive role models are at risk of recruitment and "self-recruitment" into violent extremist groups by charismatic and inspirational leaders who provide youth with meaning and direction for their lives. These leaders garner youth support for causes by legitimating violence to achieve goals.⁸ To counteract these vulnerabilities, Mercy Corps helps young people develop mentoring relationships with positive role models through internships, apprenticeships, and social networks. As a result of these constructive relationships, young people will gain a sense of purpose for their lives that will buttress them against potential negative influence from others.

Relevant Mercy Corps Programs:

- Yemen EYSY
- Kosovo SKYL and YEP

Theory of Change 7: If young people feel they and their communities are protected, then they are less likely to be driven towards violent groups for protection, security and to seek revenge.

Young people become involved with violent groups or movements to gain security or protection for themselves and their communities.⁹ Often youth will feel distrust toward conventional forces such as the

⁸ Horgan, James (2008). From Profiles to Pathways and Roots to Routes: Perspectives from Psychology on Radicalization into Terrorism. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 618, No. 1, 80-94.

⁹ USAID Youth and Conflict Toolkit, P.8 http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/conflict/publications/docs/CMM_Youth_and_Conflict_Toolkit_April_2005.pdf

police, army and/or the justice system because they do not provide physical security or justice, and in some cases such officials are the perpetrators. Additionally, exposure to propaganda and a history of victimization instill a sense of humiliation among youth, which provokes them to seek revenge. Under these circumstances, youth believe they have few to no other options and will turn to the only people they believe can help them — violent groups. To counter these feelings of insecurity and injustice, Mercy Corps' programs seek to provide youth with alternatives for protecting their communities, such as educating youth about the justice system and hosting dialogues between police, court officials and youth.

Relevant Mercy Corps' Programs:

- Timor Leste Engage and Y4A
- West Bank/Gaza: Securing Future
- Uganda Alternatives to Conflict in Karamoja and Turkana (ACKT)¹⁰

Youth-to-Youth Connections Across Lines of Division

Theory of Change 8: If youth are socially integrated, then they will be less susceptible to manipulation by political elites and violent groups.

Building connections among youth through social activities reduces youth susceptibility to manipulation by violent groups, who often use negative stereotypes to garner support. Young people are particularly susceptible to manipulation because a history of conflict and segregation often limits the contact young people have with people different from themselves. This lack of cross-group contact and education allows political elites and violent groups to dehumanize others through the use of stereotypes. By building connections across community divisions, youth can correct false stereotypes and misinformation. Through these interactions, youth learn about one another, humanize one another and recognize mutual interests. These structured interactions are particularly effective at controlling conflict when youth from different groups come together and cooperate on a multitude of projects in the economic, social and political spheres.¹¹

Relevant Mercy Corps' Programs:

- Tajikistan TCPP
- Nepal YIPR
- Kosovo SKYL
- Liberia YES
- Kenya LEAP Sport
- Sudan Sports for Peace and Life
- Global Citizen Corps (US, UK, Lebanon, West Bank/Gaza, Iraq, Pakistan, Indonesia, Kosovo)

¹⁰ <https://gait.mercycorps.org/editgrant.vm?GrantID=2971>

¹¹ According to research by Ashutash Varshney, who studied places which were peaceful and those in conflict, one of the most effective ways to control conflict is through organizations that were ethnically integrated – whether they were business associations, trade unions, political parties and others. A summary of this research can be found by referring to: Khan, Mahvish. "To Keep the Peace, Study Peace." *The New York Times*. 22 July 2002. <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/07/27/arts/27ETHN.html?pagewanted=all&pagewanted=print>

Conflict Management and Peacebuilding Training (Cross Cutting)

Theory of Change 9: If youth have the skills to discuss difficult issues, then they will be less likely to use violence to solve problems.

Young people growing up in war zones are often only exposed to one way of settling disputes: violence. As a result, rather than discussing problems and using dialogue to build understanding, young people will choose violence when confronted with conflict. By teaching youth there are ways to resolve disputes non-violently, such as negotiation, mediation, and consensus building, Mercy Corps gives young people the skills to come together and have the difficult conversations that build understanding, strengthen relationships and increase the likelihood that people can reach an agreement. In almost all of Mercy Corps' peacebuilding programs, across all three sectors (economic, political, and civil society), we include conflict management training.

Relevant Mercy Corps Programs (with a heavy training component, although most programs listed above include training):

- Kosovo SKYL
- Nepal YIPR
- Timor Leste Y4A
- Kenya LEAP Sport
- Caucuses Momentum

Youth and Conflict Programs

Employment/Income Generation

No.	Name of Program	Program Type	Objective	Theory of Change	Description
1	Securing Future West Bank/Gaza Niger SKYE Uganda Youth Empowerment Program	Youth employment	Reduction of youth participation in violence	If young people are employed, then they will be less likely to participate in violence.	Young people participate in militant activity because they need to make money and participation offers the option of being paid or gaining income through looting
2	Kosovo SKYL	Meaningful youth employment	Reduction of youth participation in violence	If young people find meaningful employment, then they will be less likely to participate in violence.	Young people do not participate in violence just for financial reasons; they also want to feel powerful and meaningful. Therefore, we need to provide them with a job that meets that need as well as the financial need.
3	Uganda BBP Ferghana CAIP Kenya LEAP	Diversification of local livelihoods	Increased stability	If community livelihood opportunities for youth are strengthened and diversified, then stability will increase.	Communities are more stable when young people do not have to compete for scarce economic resources and livelihoods. Young people often compete for livelihoods in an already saturated market and this can lead to conflict over scarce resources and or migration for jobs elsewhere.

Political Participation

No.	Name of Program	Program Type	Objective	Theory of Change	Description
4	Timor Leste Engage Timor Leste Y4A Kosovo Youth Voice Kosovo SKYL GCC	Youth influence and feel represented within political institutions	Reduce risk of youth being influenced by violent groups	If young people feel they have constructive avenues for political participation, then they are less likely to turn to violence to promote political objectives.	Young people are more likely to be manipulated by (negative) violent groups and political elites if they feel they can't influence political processes

Community Engagement

No.	Name of Program	Program Type	Objective	Theory of Change	Description
5	Kosovo SKYL Nepal YIPR Tajikistan TCPP Liberia YES GCC	Sense of belonging	Reduce risk of youth being influenced by violent groups	If we integrate youth within their communities, then they are less likely to be recruited into violent groups who give them a sense of belonging and community.	Young people need to feel a sense of belonging. If they feel isolated or marginalized from their families, communities and societies, they are more likely to find that sense of belonging from (negative) external forces (i.e., militant groups, extremist religious leaders, drugs)
6	Timor Leste Engage Timor Leste Y4A West Bank/Gaza: Securing Future	Youth feel protection and security	Reduce risk of youth being influenced by violent groups	If young people feel they and their communities are protected, then they are less likely to be driven towards violent groups for protection, security and to seek revenge.	Young people become involved with violent groups or movements to gain security or protection for themselves and their communities

Youth-to-Youth Connections Across Lines of Division

No.	Name of Program	Program Type	Objective	Theory of Change	Description
7	Tajikistan TCPP Nepal YIPR Kosovo SKYL Sudan Sports for Peace and Life Liberia YES GCC/GYE	Social Integration	Reduce risk of youth being influenced by violent groups	If youth are socially integrated, then they will be less susceptible to manipulation by political elites and violent groups.	Building connections among youth through social activities reduces youth susceptibility to manipulation by violent groups, who often use negative stereotypes to garner support.

Conflict Management and Peacebuilding Training (Cross Cutting)

No.	Name of Program	Program Type	Objective	Theory of Change	Description
8	Kosovo SKYL Nepal YIPR Timor Leste Y4A Kenya LEAP Sport Caucuses Momentum	Conflict Management and Peacebuilding Training	Reduce the risk of youth resorting to violence	If youth have the skills to discuss difficult issues, then they will be less likely to use violence to solve problems.	Young people who live in war zones tend to witness problems being solved through violence. By providing them the skills to manage conflict non-violently, they will be less likely to resort to violence.

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Indicator Menu

What are Indicators?

Indicators are the building blocks of our monitoring and evaluation systems. They are developed during project design stage, and refined as the project progresses. While indicators need to reflect the specific circumstances and details of that project, we should start with relevant sector-specific standard indicators, when available, and adapt them to the context through our definitions.

Purpose

The Youth and Conflict Indicator Menu and MC-CMG Common Indicator Menu are Indicator Tools to be used in conjunction with each other.

- The Youth and Conflict Indicator Menu provides indicators to measure the outputs, outcomes and impacts of our program interventions. These interventions are specific to addressing the reasons youth participate in violence—whether for economic security, a sense of belonging or to increase their voice in the political system.
- The MC-CMG Stability Indicator Menu focuses on the impact of conflict and peacebuilding programs, whether it is the reduction in violence, increased stability, or increased trust, increased cooperation or strengthened positive relationships. These are impacts we want to have in our conflict and peacebuilding programs regardless if we are working with youth, creating economic linkages, or managing natural resources. Please add indicators—such as reduction in violence, number of negotiated agreements, etc—to your indicator plan as well.

What the Youth and Conflict Indicator Menu Contains

The list of indicators includes four program areas for Youth and Conflict:

- Employment/Income Generation
- Political Participation
- Community Engagement
- Youth-to-Youth Connections Across Lines of Division
- Conflict Management Training (Cross-Cutting)

We have identified a total of 8 Theories of Change, explained as “If - then” statements. A Theory of Change is an explanation of how the program intervention method will have the desired effect. In this case it will be how the program intervention will reduce youth participation in conflict.¹ For example: “If young people are employed, then they will be less likely to participate in violence.”

For each Theory of Change identified, we included corresponding indicators to help measure change as a result of the intervention method.

The indicator menu includes columns with the following information:

- Indicator – the indicator as you would include in a project M&E system
- Definition of Indicator – we define all indicators in order to establish a minimum level of understanding of how each indicator is intended to be used

General Measurement Guidelines – whenever possible we also include some information on how to collect data relevant to that indicator. This includes Data Source, Data Collection Method, Frequency, Responsible Person(s) and LOP.

¹ For more information about Theories of Change, refer to Reflective Peacebuilding document available on the Conflict and Peacebuilding Community of Practice: <https://clearspace.mercycorps.org/docs/DOC-6487>



Youth and Conflict Indicator Menu

Performance Indicator				Data Acquisition, Analyses and Reporting				Target	Descriptions
No.	Performance Indicator	Type	Indicator definition and unit of measurement	Data Source	Data Collection Method/ Approach	Frequency of data collection	Responsible Person(s) & Team	LOP	Comments and Rationale
Employment/Income generation									
Theory of Change 1: If young people are employed, then they will be less likely to participate in violence.									
1	Number of young people gaining employment or better employment as a result of participation in USG funded workforce development programs	USG EG 6.3 - Workforce Development	Number of young people gaining employment or better employment within six months of participation in USG funded workforce development. Unit: Number of youth Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region, political party, religion	Program records	Direct counting of program participants that gained employment/better employment.	Quarterly	Program Staff		
2	Percent change in income from constructive employment.	USAID Youth & Conflict Toolkit	Percent change in net income generated by youth. Sources of income include private and public sector employment and small scale businesses started by youth. This also includes income generated through agricultural enterprises. Unit: percent change	Survey data Program records	Baseline, and Endline Direct counting of net income generated by youth.	Program start/ Mid-term/ End	M&E Officer Program Staff		
3	% change in number of youth achieving greater economic independence as a result of income generation activities.	Mercy Corps	Youth will be asked to provide information about their degree of economic independence prior to and following engagement in program activities, comprising sources and level of income, income required to cover personal and family costs of living and to achieve personal/professional goals. Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region, political party, religion Unit: Percent change	Survey Data	Baseline and Endline	Program start/ Mid-term/ End	M&E Officer Program Staff		A similar indicator was used in Kenya LEAPII, and we found interesting data regarding youth dependency on politicians.
4	% change in # of young people in target communities who begin to question the value of the economic benefits that militants/elites promise them	Mercy Corps	Percent change in number of young people in target communities who begin to question the value of the economic benefits that militants/elites promise then. This may include recognizing the costs of accepting money from elites, refuse handouts, try to find alternative sources of income in order to be less reliant on handouts, etc. Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region, political party, religion Unit: Percent change	Survey data	Baseline and Endline	Program start/ Mid-term/ End	M&E Officer		
5	Number of businesses or institutions responding to incentives for incorporating at-risk/marginalized youth	USAID Youth & Conflict Toolkit	Number of business or institutions that respond to calls and programs to work with at-risk/marginalized youth. Responses include: mentoring start-ups, apprenticeships, internships, training, job programs and employment. Unit: Number of business and institutions	Program records	Direct counting of businesses and institutions	Quarterly	Program Staff		
Theory of Change 2: If young people find meaningful employment, then they will be less likely to participate in violent movements as a way to gain respect and self-fulfillment.									
6	Number of young people who gain skills and on-the-job experience that will help them find employment by the end of the project	Mercy Corps	Number of young people who gain skills and on-the-job experience that will help them find employment by the end of the project. Opportunities to gain skills and on-the-job experience include workforce development programs, business trainings, internships and apprenticeships. Unit: Number of young people Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region, political party, religion	Program records	Direct counting of youth in training programs or apprenticeships/ internships	Quarterly	M&E Officer Program Staff		This indicator includes some of the indicators outlined in the USAID Youth and Conflict Toolkit: apprenticeships/internships and business training programs
7	Number of young people placed in meaningful work	Mercy Corps	Meaningful work is defined as employment that provides youth financial resources as well as a feeling that they are making a positive contribution to their society. These positions are often in business, government, and social services.	Program records	Direct counting of youth who find meaningful work	Quarterly	Program Staff		
Theory of Change 3: If livelihood opportunities for youth are strengthened and diversified, then the competition for scarce resources will be reduced and stability will increase.									
8	Total amount of start-up capital raised by young people	Mercy Corps	Total amount of start-up capital raised by young people for youth-run businesses. Unit: USD	Program records	Financial records of start-up businesses	Quarterly	Program Staff		
9	Percent of businesses started by youth still in operation one year later	USAID Youth & Conflict Toolkit	Percent of youth-initiated businesses that result from program activities and are still in operation one year later. Unit: percent of businesses	Program records	Direct counting of businesses	Quarterly	Program Staff		
10	Number of employed-person months/years generated through short- and long-term jobs in their local community	Mercy Corps	Number of employed-person months/years generated through short- and long-term jobs in their local community. Unit: number of months/years Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region, political party, religion	Program records Survey data	Baseline and Endline Direct counting of months/years youth are employed.	Quarterly	Program Staff		MC Market Development Indicator. Alternatively, you can separate this out into short-term and long-term jobs created. See Market Development Indicator Menu on DL
11	Number of joint economic infrastructure projects that demonstrate the positive impact of stability through tangible, practical benefits	Mercy Corps	Results-based activities, including quick-impact and joint projects that can demonstrate the positive impact of cooperation and peace. Unit: Projects	Program records	Direct counting of joint economic infrastructure projects	Quarterly	Program Staff		
12	Percent change in number of young people who feel there are livelihood opportunities available and/or possible in their local communities	Mercy Corps	Percent change of young people who feel there are livelihood opportunities available and/or possible in their local communities. Unit: Percent change Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region, political party, religion	Survey Data	Baseline, Endline	Program start/ Mid-term/ End	M&E Officer Program Staff		This is similar to the EAPC indicator: % change in # of youth in target communities who express greater hope in their economic future
Political Participation									
Theory of Change 4: If young people feel they have constructive avenues for political participation, then they are less likely to turn to violence to promote political objectives.									
13	Number of youth who have completed USG assisted civic education training programs	USAID GJD 4.1	Programs are designed to promote understanding of the democratic process. A "program" may be a course, seminar, training or school-based class of any length. Training programs and curriculum can include any of the following: civic rights and responsibilities; training of trainers; democratic processes; community mobilization. Unit: number of young people Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region, political party, religion	Program records	Direct counting of training participants	Each training cycle	Program Staff		Target recommendations: To determine the total target population for trainings, decide on how many training sessions to hold and multiply by 20 (number of participants per training) Do not list the full # of people we're aiming to enroll as the target, since there will inevitably be some drop-outs.

14	Percent change of young people who feel confident they have the skills to influence political decisions	Mercy Corps	Percent change of young people who feel confident they have the skills (advocacy, negotiation, relationship-building, leadership) to influence political decisions. Examples of political decisions include: youth policy, political platforms, educational reform, conscription and labor reforms. Unit: percent change Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region, political party, religion	Survey data	Baseline, Endline	Program start/ Mid-term/ End	M&E Officer Program Staff	Focus groups and interviews provide additional qualitative information to support the quantitative findings. Other techniques, including Most Significant Change, Participatory Impact Assessment (PIA), and Outcome Mapping, that specialize in generating beneficiary perspective on impact in a participatory way may also be used. See Participatory M&E tip sheet for more information.
15	Percent change of youth who participate in political decision-making processes that directly affect them	Mercy Corps	Percent change of youth who participate in political decision-making processes that directly affect them. These include (but are not limited to): organize advocacy campaigns; involvement in political parties; meetings with political leaders; and youth who are elected to local or national level offices. Unit: percent change Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region, political party, religion	Survey data Program records	Baseline and Endline Direct counting of youth involved in political decision-making processes	Quarterly	M&E Officer Program Staff	
16	Percent change of youth who feel their voice/opinion is represented by political authorities and decision makers	Mercy Corps	Percent change of youth who feel their voice/opinion is represented by political authorities and decision makers. Unit: percent change Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region, political party, religion	Survey data	Baseline, Endline	Program start/ Mid-term/ End	M&E Officer Program Staff	Focus groups and interviews provide additional qualitative information to support the quantitative findings. Other techniques, including Most Significant Change, Participatory Impact Assessment (PIA), and Outcome Mapping, that specialize in generating beneficiary perspective on impact in a participatory way may also be used. See Participatory M&E tip sheet for more information.
17	Number of joint initiatives between youth organizations and strategic governance agencies	Catholic Relief Services	This indicator is a measure of the frequency of joint youth and local government engagement in local civic processes. Joint initiatives may be those that are jointly organized by youth NGOs and the government, government initiatives where youth NGOs are invited to participate, youth NGOs where the government is invited to participate or another form based on the context. Unit: number Disaggregated by: region, types of youth organizations participating in the initiative, ethnicity, gender different government officials participating in the meetings; key governance issues addressed during the meetings	Program records	Direct counting of joint initiatives between youth and government agencies	Quarterly	M&E Officer Program Staff	The CRS indicator included "in X time period." It is assumed that all the indicators in this menu will be time-bound--usually for the program period.

Community Engagement

Theory of Change 5: If young people collaborate on initiatives that contribute to the protection and development of their communities, then they will become more connected to and be respected by their communities.

18	Percent change of young people who actively participate in community decision-making processes that directly affect them	Mercy Corps	Percent change of young people who actively participate in community decision-making processes that directly affect them. Community decision-making activities include: youth voter participation, community projects, meetings with community leaders, youth participation in local community councils. Unit: percent change Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region, political party, religion	Survey data Program records	Baseline, Endline Direct counting of program participants	Program start/ Mid-term/ End	M&E Officer Program Staff	Community decision-making and civic engagement can be used interchangeably. Sometimes it is easier to translate community decision-making into another language which is why this term was chosen. For Mission Metrics, MC is using the term civic engagement.
19	Percent change of young people who feel confident they have the skills to influence community affairs that affect them	Mercy Corps	Percent change of young people who feel confident that they have acquired the skills (advocacy, negotiation, relationship-building, leadership) to affect community affairs that directly affect them. Unit: percent change Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region and religion.	Survey data	Baseline, Endline	Program start/ Mid-term/ End	M&E Officer Program Staff	Focus groups and interviews provide additional qualitative information to support the quantitative findings. Other techniques, including Most Significant Change, Participatory Impact Assessment (PIA), and Outcome Mapping, that specialize in generating beneficiary perspective on impact in a participatory way may also be used. See Participatory M&E tip sheet for more information.
20	Percent change of young people who feel a sense of belonging to their community	Mercy Corps	Percent change of young people who feel they belong to their community. Unit: percent change Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region, political party, religion	Survey data	Baseline, Endline	Program start/ Mid-term/ End	M&E Officer Program Staff	The indicator "percent change of young people who actively participate in community decision-making processes that directly affect them," provides behavioral measure that corresponds to this indicator.
21	Percent change in the level of adult community members' confidence in youth's ability to participate in community decisions	Mercy Corps	Percent change in the level of adult community members' confidence in youth's ability to participate in community decisions. Unit: percent change Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region, political party, religion	Survey data	Baseline, Endline	Program start/ Mid-term/ End	M&E Officer Program Staff	Focus groups and interviews provide additional qualitative information to support the quantitative findings. Other techniques, including Most Significant Change, Participatory Impact Assessment (PIA), and Outcome Mapping, that specialize in generating beneficiary perspective on impact in a participatory way may also be used. See Participatory M&E tip sheet for more information.
22	Percent change in the number of young people who feel respected by their families, local government, and communities.	Mercy Corps	Percent change in the number of young people who report feeling a greater respect from community members over the course of the program. Unit: percent change Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region, political party, religion	Survey data	Baseline, Endline	Program start/ Mid-term/ End	M&E Officer Program Staff	

Theory of Change 6: If young people are mentored by positive role models who help them transition from youth to adulthood, then they will develop a sense of purpose in their lives.

23	Number of mentors paired with 'at-risk' youth	Mercy Corps	Number of community leaders who mentor young people in the targeted districts. Unit: people Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region, political party, religion	Program records	Direct counting of community leaders who mentor participants.	Quarterly	Program Staff	
24	Change in number of connections young people have to other community members.	Mercy Corps	Change in number of people youth report having a strong relationship to, including peers, family, community members and government officials. Unit: Change in number of connections Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region, political party, religion	Survey Data Relationship Mapping	Baseline, Endline	Program start/ Mid-term/ End	M&E Officer Program Staff	
25	Percent change in young people who feel they have direction in their lives.	Mercy Corps	Percent change of young people who report that they feel that they have direction in their lives and/or see that their lives have purpose. Unit: percent change	Survey data	Baseline, Endline	Program start/ Mid-term/ End	M&E Officer Program Staff	

Theory of Change 6: If young people feel they and their communities are protected, then they are less likely to be driven towards violent groups for protection, security and to seek revenge.

26	Percent change of youth who know how to address injustices	Mercy Corps	Percent of youth who understand how to address injustices. This includes understanding how judicial bodies work and where they are located. This also includes knowing who the security forces are and how to approach them. Unit: percent change Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region, political party, religion	Survey data	Baseline, Endline	Program start/ Mid-term/ End	M&E Officer Program Staff	
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27	Percent change in youth who feel confident that their communities are protected	Mercy Corps	Percent of youth who feel the police and judicial bodies are protecting them and their communities. Unit: percent change Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region, political party, religion	Survey data	Baseline, Endline	Program start/ Mid-term/ End	M&E Officer Program Staff	
28	Percent change of youth who see improvement in community protection and security	Mercy Corps	Percent change of youth who see improvement in community and personal security as compared to program start. Unit: percent change Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region, political party, religion	Survey data	Baseline, Endline	Program start/ Mid-term/ End	M&E Officer Program Staff	Adapted from USAID Youth and Conflict toolkit
29	Number of youth involved in community protection and security	Mercy Corps	Number of youth involved in community and security. This can include involvement in any of the following groups or activities (but not limited to): joint monitoring missions; community policing; community watch. Unit : Number of people Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region, political party, religion	Program records	Direct counting of program participants	Quarterly	Program Staff	

Youth-to-Youth Connections Across Lines of Division

Theory of Change 7: If youth are socially integrated, then they will be less susceptible to manipulation by political elites and violent groups.

30	Number of people attending facilitated events that are geared toward strengthening understanding among conflict-affected groups that were supported with USG assistance	USAID PS 6.1	Number of youth attending inter-community peace and reconciliation dialogues to understand the causes of violence in their community. Unit: Number of people. Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region, political party, religion	Program records	Direct counting of participants	Quarterly	Program Staff	Dialogue recommendation: To determine the total target population for dialogue sessions, decide on how many dialogue sessions to hold and multiply by 25 (number of participants per dialogue)
31	Number of joint projects implemented that build trust and promote reconciliation through the identification of shared interests	Mercy Corps	Number of joint projects that build trust and promote reconciliation through the identification of shared interests. Unit: Projects	Program records	Direct counting of projects	Quarterly	Program Staff	
32	Percent change in frequency of positive interactions with youth from different groups	Mercy Corps	Percent change in frequency of how often youth interact with youth from different backgrounds, and consider the interaction positive. This is a proxy measure for reduction in stereotypes (See Banaji & Greenwald for the difficulty in explicitly measuring stereotypes) Unit: Percent change	Survey data	Baseline, Endline	Program start/ Mid-term/ End	M&E officer Program Staff	
33	Percent change in number of young people who report an increased awareness of challenges and interests of different groups and communities.	Mercy Corps	Percent change in number of young people who report an increased awareness of challenges and interests of different groups and communities. Unit: Percent change Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region, political party, religion	Survey data	Baseline, Endline	Program start/ Mid-term/ End	M&E officer Program Staff	
34	Percent change in number of young people who have friends who belong to violent movements.	Mercy Corps	Percent change in number of young people who report that they have friends who belong to violent movements. This indicator will examine both young people's networks and social norms of the groups they interact with. Unit: Percent Change Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region, political party, religion	Survey data	Baseline, Endline	Program start/ Mid-term/ End	M&E officer Program Staff	This indicator is based off the research of Humphries and Weinstein and Paluck Levy.

Conflict Management and Peacebuilding Training (Cross Cutting)

Theory of Change 8: If youth have the skills to discuss difficult issues, then they will be less likely to use violence to solve problems.

35	Number of young people trained in conflict mitigation/resolution skills with USG assistance	USAID PS 6.1	Number of young people who participated in USG-supported conflict resolution/mitigation skills training programs. This includes negotiation and peacebuilding workshops, +Sports Conflict curriculum, and the Program for Young Negotiators. Unit: Number of young people. Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region, political party, religion	Program Records	Direct counting of training participants	Training Cycle	Program Staff	Target recommendations: To determine the total target population for trainings, decide on how many training sessions to hold and multiply by 20 (number of participants per training) Do not list the full # of people we're aiming to enroll as the target, since there will inevitably be some drop-outs.
36	Percent of program participants who demonstrate an increase in knowledge of conflict mitigation/resolution skills	Mercy Corps	Percent of program participants who demonstrate an increase in knowledge of conflict mitigation/resolution skills. Knowledge will be tested through pre and post- training questionnaires. Unit: Percent Disaggregated by: age, ethnicity, gender, region, political party, religion	Survey data	Survey of trainees pre and post-training	Each training cycle	Program Staff	

Mercy Corps

Youth and Conflict

Best Practices and Lessons Learned



Photograph: Joni Kabana for Mercy Corps

Mercy Corps believes youth are a force for positive change — the generation that can help transition their countries into productive and secure nations. However, youth are the primary participants in conflict today. The reasons they participate in conflict are multi-dimensional — they lack economic opportunities, political voice and a sense of belonging or connection to their communities. Often the only way young people can imagine changing their predicament is through violence.¹ In our programs, Mercy Corps catalyzes youth's desire for change into positive outlets. For example, in West Bank/Gaza, Kosovo and Kenya, we help youth create economic opportunities and increase their livelihoods. In Timor Leste, we help youth representatives engage the government around youth priorities. And we help integrate youth back into the communities in Nepal, Liberia, and Uganda.

Below is a sample of Youth and Conflict Best Practices and Lessons Learned drawn from Mercy Corps' programs, other agencies, donors, think tanks and researchers. The Best Practices and Lessons Learned presented below are divided into six sections:

- General Program Design and Implementation. This section includes advice on training, as it is a central part of many of our youth programs.
- Economic Engagement
- Political Participation
- Youth-to-Community Connections
- Youth-to-Youth Connections
- Addendum: Lessons from Our Colleagues

Mercy Corps Conflict Management Group (MC CMG) has also created an indicator menu and a Theories of Change document based on the same categories. This set of documents is intended to help with program design, implementation and evaluation.

¹ Urdal, H. (2004). The Devil in the Demographics: The Effect of Youth Bulges on Domestic Armed Conflict: 1940-2000.

General Program Design and Implementation

Apply a Multi-Sectoral Approach to Reduce Youth Participation in Violence

Youth participate in violence for many reasons: lack of hope for the future; limited economic opportunities; traditional structures that neglect the voices of young people; and broken ties with families and communities. These factors contribute to a sense of loss and a lack of belonging. Mercy Corps therefore adopts an integrated approach to preventing young people from joining violent movements and promotes a wide range of economic, public sector, and community engagement opportunities in our youth and conflict programming. For example, in Kosovo youth 1) receive economic training and are placed into private or public sector internships; 2) participate in community development projects with government leaders; and 3) receive negotiation and conflict management training so they can learn how to talk to their former enemies and work together on joint projects.

Promote Youth Leadership and Ownership

Young people need to take the lead in creating their own future.² Engaging young people in the project cycle will help nurture and encourage emerging youth leaders to learn, to lead, and to identify areas that may be of interest for future careers. Furthermore, inclusion of youth in project design and implementation provides youth with the self-esteem, connection to peers and communities and a positive self-identity, all of which reduce vulnerability to joining violent movements. The most successful youth programs recognize these factors and give young people a significant role in designing and implementing programs with the guidance and support of adult mentors. In Mercy Corps' Nepal program, young people designed community projects for which they raised money and subsequently built and helped maintain. By including youth in all phases of the project, Mercy Corps enabled youth to see themselves as change agents responsible for their future.³

Leverage Youth Interests to Teach Peace-building Skills

Where many conflict management programs fall short is in their tendency to engage the easiest youth to reach—those in school and/or already engaged with their communities. The youth that pose the largest risk to instability, however, may be those that are difficult to reach for a variety of factors, including earning an income or lack of interest. For example, many youth do not participate in conflict management and youth leadership programs because they are busy trying to provide for themselves and their families. If increasing economic opportunities is a priority, youth will sacrifice participation in leadership and community-based programs in lieu of economic possibilities elsewhere. As a result, Mercy Corps offered stipends in places like Kashmir and Nepal to help young people remain engaged throughout the program. Mercy Corps has also found that sports provide a strong incentive for youth to participate in conflict management trainings. Youth in Liberia were much more likely to remember lessons they learned through sports and were much more likely to finish the training program if there was a sports component.⁴

Provide Youth the Skills to Successfully Transition to Adulthood

Conflict-affected youth often experience interruptions in education and later may be too old to return to the formal education system. At the same time, these young people often lack the basic skills they need to secure jobs once the conflict has ended. Mercy Corps works in a variety of ways to help youth successfully transition into adulthood by bridging this education gap and thus reduce frustrations and disconnectedness that

² USAID CMM (2005) Youth and Conflict Toolkit.

³ Also see USAID CMM (2005) Youth and Conflict: A Toolkit for Intervention

⁴ Mercy Corps (2009) Lessons from Practice: A Post-Impact Investigation of Mercy Corps' Youth Education for Life Skills (YES) and YES to Soccer Programs in Liberia.

contribute to young people's propensity to become involved in conflict. We do this by working within formal education systems but most often through informal education programs and extra-curricular activities. Our post-conflict education programs include vocational training and life-skills education, such as communication, negotiation, public speaking and critical thinking. In addition, Mercy Corps developed a Youth Conflict Management curriculum⁵ that teaches youth how to analyze conflicts, negotiate over interests, mediate disputes, and move towards reconciliation and forgiveness. This curriculum is the basis of our sports and conflict programs in Kenya and Sri Lanka. Additionally, to help over 2.5 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan restart their lives, Mercy Corps utilized Vocational Training Centers to provide training to over 3,000 students, largely youth, in trades such as carpentry, beauty therapy, computer literacy, and health work. Forty percent of graduates were female and over 400 program graduates continued their education to become government-certified practitioners in their new fields.

Consult Parents and Elders to Gain Acceptance

The transition to adulthood is very personal, but it is also deeply influenced by the attitudes of family and community, two particularly important elements in traditional societies. Youth, particularly young women, may look to these groups for permission to participate. Parents and elders may be wary that programs to empower youth will result in inter-generational conflict and that they may lose their status and power relative to youth. If these families and communities are fully aware of potential activities and see them as important and safe and not intended to disrupt social structures, then young people will be much more able to participate and fully embrace the proposed objectives. Furthermore, endorsement of youth activities by the community enhances respect for and self-esteem of young people. These factors will lead to greater sustainability for the projects in the long-term. Therefore, Mercy Corps consults parents and influential community members who often have a major say over their children's decisions.

Special Case of Extremism – Focus on Pull Factors

To combat youth joining extremist groups, program designers need to understand the decision-making process of the individual within her/his social context. According to James Horgan, counterterrorism programs would be more effective by concentrating on "pull factors": lures that attract people to joining a group (e.g., religion, group norms, ideology). This is in contrast of "push factors": forces or conditions that can alienate people or cause them to reject mainstream society (e.g., widespread poverty, high unemployment among youth, endemic corruption and elite impunity, vastly inadequate public-services delivery, or the existence of ungoverned spaces).⁶ For example, a lack of access to other ideas and ways of thinking can lead to insularity amongst youth. When youth have no basis for comparison, the singular and direct views of extremism can appear attractive and worthy of support. Therefore, creating programs that introduce youth to other ideas and people different than themselves, such as Mercy Corps' Global Citizen Corps (GCC) program, reduces the risk of youth joining extremist groups. Mercy Corps also adapted these lessons in designing our Yemen program, where we pair young people with positive role models who can keep them involved in productive activities.

Overcoming Education Gaps

In Northern Uganda, where the LRA forcibly recruited many child soldiers and many young people were unable to go to schools for years, Mercy Corps combines life skills and entrepreneurial education with income generating activities to help youth develop the knowledge and skills needed to transition into adulthood. For example, Ocira Kenneth, a cheerful 23-year-old, used his newly developed market assessment skills to leverage a grant to cultivate land into a chicken-rearing business. The new income has allowed Kenneth to purchase urgent medical supplies for his family, as well as pay school fees for two members of his clan. In addition, he purchased two piglets in anticipation of future business endeavors.

⁵ <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsdI/cgi-bin/goindex?c=progdev&q=Subject::Youth::Training,CurriculumWorkshopMaterials::YouthCurriculum::ConflictManagement>

Economic Engagement

Engage Youth in Meaningful Work

Many programs that provide youth sources of income fall short in reducing violence because they neglect other factors that drive youth towards joining violent movements. Youth are also searching for a sense of purpose and belonging, which can be derived from doing meaningful work that helps their communities.⁶ Violent movements often provide youth with both livelihoods and a larger purpose. In Kosovo and West Bank/Gaza, Mercy Corps reduces this risk by providing youth opportunities to engage in meaningful work — employment in areas that provide not only a livelihood, but give youth a positive identity — such as teaching, medical professions, government, accounting and starting their own businesses.

Provide Young People with Practical Experiences

It is not enough to provide youth with financial resources to help increase their income. They need practical experiences, often via internships and apprenticeships, to help them develop the skills to leverage economic opportunities into long-term income generation. In Kosovo, Mercy Corps helps young people gain job skills, work experience, and employment opportunities through internships and apprenticeships that pair youth leaders with local entrepreneurs and public sector employees in the fields where youth believe they can make a difference. Mercy Corps has thus far placed nearly 1,000 youth in internships, with more than 200 in full-time employment.

Conduct Market Analyses with Youth in Mind

According to Making Cents International's *State of the Field in Youth Enterprise, Employment and Livelihoods Development, 2008*, many market and value chain assessments do not take into consideration the type of sectors and opportunities that are appropriate for youth. Consequently, they may receive vocational training or be encouraged to start small businesses that are unlikely to succeed, breeding a greater sense of hopelessness and frustration. To overcome this problem, at a minimum, it is critical to interview youth when conducting market assessments. For a more participatory process, youth can help conduct the market assessment. This will also help youth develop creativity and entrepreneurship, both of which are necessary in a changing environment. The Women's Commission's *Market Assessment Manual for Vocational Training Providers and Youth*⁷ provides tools for conducting participatory market assessments.

For more best practices on youth economic engagement, see Mercy Corps' *Youth Entrepreneurship and Workforce Development Tip Sheet*.⁸

Kicks for Cash!

One of Mercy Corps Kenya's inter-ethnic football team under LEAP Sport demonstrated that combining market analysis, entrepreneurial spirit, and teamwork can create significant opportunities for youth across conflict lines. In Eldoret East district, the Munyaka Football Club capitalized on the hysteria surrounding "Africa's" World Cup by applying for seed money to establish a DSTV viewing venue. By charging minimal entrance fees, the team was able to take in approximately \$50/day over the course of the tournament. Now well established as an entertainment venue in the community, the group has expanded beyond sports to showing movies as well. LEAP Sport training on profit management, reinvestment, and savings will enable the business to continue flourish into the future.

⁶ World Youth Report 2005: <http://www0.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/wpayconflict.htm>

⁷ Mercy Corps was one of the contributing organizations in the development of this tool.

⁸ Youth Entrepreneurship and Workforce Development Tip Sheet: <https://clearspace.mercycorps.org/docs/DOC-11200>



Photograph: Miguel Samper for Mercy Corps

Political Participation

Increase Youth Voice at the Local and National-level

Although young people constitute the majority of the population in transitional and fragile states, young people have few constructive avenues to influence local and national governments. As a result, governments do not design policies with youth in mind. Young people also tend to see many governments as corrupt, beset by nepotism and unaccountable to the people they represent. Consequently, this can lead to youth disillusionment, an avoidance of political involvement, and/or increased vulnerability to recruitment by violent movements. For example, youth who do not feel represented or supported by any political party are two- to three-times more likely to join violent movements, voluntarily or involuntarily.⁹ By providing youth with the capabilities and opportunities to engage with governments, Mercy Corps helps young people address their concerns and grievances. In Timor Leste, Mercy Corps reduced youth participation in violence by helping over 5,000 youth representatives in building ties to their community members and local council members. Young leaders participated with government officials in joint workshops on civic education, which fostered strong relationships after years of isolation. In addition, youth received mentoring and small grants that helped them apply their newly developed skills toward implementing community development activities with the support of local councils. At the end of the program, youth reported that they met with local officials more frequently and vocalized increased confidence in working with government officials, sharing that the government was more apt to listen to youth concerns.

Teach Youth that Politics Involves Building Consensus

Good governance is about incorporating multiple opinions and interests into sound policy. However, many feel if they won an election, their interests should prevail and they can disregard the interests of others. This tendency is particularly strong when there are religious and ethnic divisions. With few avenues for a constructive exchange of ideas, youth become frustrated and believe that violence is the way to influence others, as we saw in the post-election violence in Kenya. Mercy Corps' Global Citizen Corps' (GCC) program

⁹ Humphreys, Macartan and Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Who Fights? The Determinants of Participation in Civil War*, American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 52, No. 2, April 2008, p.447. http://www.stanford.edu/~jweinst/files/AJPS_2008.pdf

helps young people learn to discuss issues with people from different backgrounds and who may see the world differently than themselves. Dialogue between GCC participants within and across countries bridges geographic and cultural divides, challenges stereotypes, and supports information-sharing and relationship-building. Mercy Corps will adapt elements of GCC to help young people build a sense of shared national identity in upcoming programs in Kenya and Kosovo.

Build Trust between Government and Youth

One of the issues that fuels conflict in many societies is young people's distrust in the government. In youth assessments in Yemen, Kosovo, Kenya, Kashmir and Tajikistan, one of young people's top frustrations is the amount of government corruption. Mercy Corps helps bridge this divide by providing young people opportunities to work with governments on community projects. Working with youth groups in Tajikistan to implement community projects, we helped increase youth dialogue with the local government. Through these dialogues, youth designed and implemented projects that provided water to nearly 4,000 individuals and electricity to 1,900 individuals. Additionally, police officials from the Tavildara region reported a 70% decrease in crime during the project, with fewer reports of youth involved in conflicts. In Kosovo, as a result of working with the government on community projects, youth's trust in government rose 63%.

Local Governance through Youth Municipalities

In Lebanon, Mercy Corps is setting an example of how transparent and accountable local governance reduces young people's frustrations with government. The *Local Governance through Youth Municipalities* project seeks to inspire the next generation of leaders to create political systems free from social, economic and political corruption and favoritism. The project cultivates youth leadership and sense of identity by engaging 150 young people in five areas of Lebanon to undergo an election process to create and manage five Youth Municipalities. The Municipalities function as "shadow" city councils and develop comprehensive agendas for youth in their communities.

Youth-to-Community Connections

Strengthen Youth Networks

Personal relationships play an important role in shaping young people's identities, convictions, and belief systems. Mercy Corps helps young people develop mentoring relationships with positive role models through internships, apprenticeships, and enhancing their social networks. Through mentoring and engagement with local councils and community groups, participants develop relationships and networks that keep them grounded in their communities and reduce their vulnerability to recruitment from violent groups or influence from other negative forces. In Nepal, Mercy Corps found that by incentivizing young people to reach out to the community for support on projects, they were able to develop connections to other youth, their community and government, and in turn, were less susceptible to recruitment from violent groups.¹⁰

Include the Community as Beneficiaries in the Reintegration Processes

Reintegration of child soldiers into their communities after war is much more successful if local community members can draw direct benefits from the programs.¹¹ For example, in Liberia, youth participated in a community project to run and maintain a guesthouse. Young people made bed bases out of local materials and mattresses were bought with community funds. The guesthouse provides a regular source of income for the community and funds generated from the project have been loaned to community members to pay hospital fees. The guesthouse is even serving as a temporary classroom.

Support Youth in Positively Contributing to their Communities

Youth often are significant proportion of the combatants in many conflicts. One of the reasons youth are attracted to violent movements and violence is that young people can often attain feelings of respect and status that they cannot find in other activities or relationships. Youth-led community service projects provide opportunities for youth to positively contribute to their communities and increase their status in their communities. In Nepal, adults interviewed mentioned repeatedly that watching youth implement service projects increased their confidence in youth to play a positive role in their communities and demonstrated to community members that it is safe to let young people return. That the projects included and benefited adults, rather than worked with youth in isolation, allowed youth to show what a positive force they could be for the whole community.

Helping those Less Fortunate in Nepal

In Nepal, Mercy Corps worked to reduce the likelihood violence would re-emerge after a 10-year civil war between Maoists and the Government. Through program activities, youth from different ethnic groups and castes were brought together through Village Youth Clubs, sports competitions and cultural programs to form bonds after years of divisions. The experience of working together on these activities created strong friendships between the youth. One Youth Club, after completing their first project, decided to help Muslim and Dalit (low caste) youth in their community by raising money to help pay for local school fees.

¹⁰ Mercy Corps (2008). Youth Initiatives for Peace and Reconciliation Endline Study. Nepal.

¹¹ UNDP (2006). Youth and Violent Conflict: Society and Development in Crisis.

Youth-to-Youth Connections

Socially Integrate Former Youth Combatants and Hardliners

War and conflict dislocate youth, particularly ex-combatants. As a result, these young people lose connection to their communities and their peers. Reconnecting former youth combatants with their peers who did not fight reduces the ability of militants to re-recruit young people who have left the ranks.¹² Equally important is reconnecting youth who were former enemies. Unfortunately, peacebuilding programs often make one of two mistakes: they either focus exclusively on hardliners or ‘at-risk’ populations (and have the unintended consequence of rewarding negative behaviors) or they only include people who already support issues like multi-ethnic tolerance (and limit their impact by preaching to youth who already believe in a multi-ethnic society). In Kosovo, Mercy Corps includes both young people who are committed to a multi-ethnic future and those who are more skeptical. This latter group is particularly important since on both the Albanian and Serb sides, many young people who participate in nationalist movements tend to have strong leadership qualities and the respect of their communities.

Reduce Stereotypes through Repeated Interactions

In protracted conflicts, people from the conflicting groups are often segregated from one another, having few relationships across conflict lines. In situations where youth were born into conflict, they may never have met someone from the opposing group(s). Additionally, the majority of their information about others comes through propaganda rather than personal experience. However, many youth peacebuilding programs only organize youth to meet a couple of times over the life of the program, and often in a large group. In Kenya, Mercy Corps’ LEAP and LEAP Sport program promotes peace and reconciliation after the 2007 post-election violence by bringing together youth from the Kalenjin, Kikuyu, Luo, Luhya, Kisii, Kamba, and other tribes repeatedly over 18 months. Through both programs, youth came together for peacebuilding, life skills and entrepreneurial trainings, lasting a minimum of 10 weeks. Youth also worked together across ethnic lines on cash for work and income generating activities. The evaluation data show that LEAP youth participants now interact more frequently with members of other tribes than at the beginning of the program, and that their levels of trust and willingness to cooperate have increased. As one program participant explained, “I come from the ghetto and every now and then there are conflicts. Now I can try and mediate between parties.”

Forgiveness and Reconciliation on the Sports Field

During the post-election violence between the Kikuyu and Kalenjin in Kenya in 2007-8, David Ng’ang’a was shot by an arrow in his chest. Although he recovered from his wound, David became deeply resentful of the tribe of the man who shot him. Mercy Corps’ LEAP SPORT program gave David Ng’ang’a the tools and opportunity to move past his anger and engage those he once fought against. By playing on an inter-tribal soccer team, he learned to forgive and work with members of other tribes. He also served an important role in the community by acting as a mediator to help resolve conflicts around him. David is now a group leader with our local partner A-STEP. Click here to see a video about David’s experience in the LEAP SPORT program: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCu6Dw6N7kw>

¹² Humphreys and Weinstein found having friends who were combatants increased the likelihood that people would voluntarily join militant groups. While the converse has not been empirically tested, research has shown that peers have a strong influence on young people’s behavior. Therefore if the majority of their peers are non-combatants, they may be less likely to join militant movements. Humphreys, M. & Weinstein, J (2008). Who Fights? The Determinants of Participation in Civil War. *American Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 52 (2), pp. 436-455.

Addendum: Lessons from Our Colleagues

In addition to the best practices and lessons learned at Mercy Corps, there is much to be gained from the experiences of our colleagues, including other agencies, donors, think tanks, and researchers. This section serves as a resource to those who are interested in learning about what other organizations are doing in youth and conflict. Organized by the same sections as above, it provides additional information on relevant research, best practices, and lessons learned.

General Program Design and Implementation

Leverage Youth Interests to Teach Peace-building Skills

By integrating peace-building messages into economic generation programs, the American Refugee Committee helped reduce the economic insecurity that led many youth to participate in violence. The micro enterprise training was tailored to vocations with local market potential and integrated anti-violence and reconciliation messages. Youth who received the grants reported a 55% increase in income, a reduction of poverty (from 72% to 62%), a reduced interest in combat (82% to 46%), a reduced participation in violence (21% to 15%) and fewer incidences of known violence (65% to 50%).¹³

Economic Engagement

Provide Young People with Practical Experiences

CHF International's Youth for Change and Conflict Resolution (YCCR) program, funded by USAID's CMM, engaged at-risk youth in Colombia who frequently join armed groups or engage in gang violence due to a lack of livelihood opportunities. YCCR helped youth leverage economic opportunities through matching qualified youth with entry-level positions and by subsidizing business trainings for youth.¹⁴

Political Participation

Increase Youth Voice at the Local and National-Level

The Reconciliation and Development Programme (REDES), a collaboration between United Nations Development Programme/Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery and the Swedish International Development Agency in Colombia, reduced youth's participation in violence through dialogue activities that promoted an inclusive and participatory process for formulating public policy concerning youth rights. Youth networks participated in the regional development planning activities as well as the allocation of local budgets.¹⁵ To foster dialogue at the national level in Lebanon, Office of Transition Initiatives organized "Hyde Park" debates for young people, which were broadcasted on a leading Lebanese television channel. Reaching more than 750,000 viewers, youth had the opportunity to discuss topics such as political extremism, government accountability and Palestinian refugees with each other and with political leaders. OTI also created a national youth dialogue in parallel with the Lebanese President's National Dialogue.¹⁶

¹³ http://www.chfhq.org/files/6166_file_Final_with_cover.pdf

¹⁴ <http://www.chfinternational.org/node/21216>

¹⁵ http://www.globala.sida.se/sida/jsp/sida.jsp?d=118&a=35234&language=en_US

¹⁶ http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/transition_initiatives/country/lebanon2/annrpt0908.html

Teach Youth that Politics Involves Building Consensus

In Kenya, there is a long history of political parties manipulating youth to be their perpetrators of violence. These youth learn that democracy means “winner takes all” rather than a winner’s responsibility to build consensus among multiple parties. As a result, youth learn intolerance and lack an understanding about collaboration in the political processes. To counteract these tendencies and teach youth good governance, National Democratic Institute’s Leadership Academy teaches youth the importance of listening to all perspectives before coming to a conclusion, and the value of working together towards a common purpose.¹⁷

Youth-to-Community Connections

Include Psychosocial Programming as Part of a Community-based Rehabilitation Model

Long-term cooperation across lines of division are difficult to maintain if youth are not able to confront and develop an understanding of the trauma they have experienced. Additionally, unless trauma is addressed, young people can find it extremely difficult to trust and work with others long after conflict has ended, stifling their own societies’ development. However, western psychological models alone are often inadequate for helping youth cope with trauma in developing societies. A community-based rehabilitation model can be successful at reducing youth violence if it provides youth opportunities to discuss difficult emotions, gives them opportunities to develop life skills, educates adults about the needs of young people and provides opportunities for youth to positively contribute to the community. In Angola, the Christian Children’s Fund implemented a community-based program that, in addition to providing psychosocial support, taught youth life skills, provided peer support and peace education, educated adults about youth, and engaged youth as workers on community development projects.¹⁸ The interventions increased adult awareness of the youth’s needs, improved youth-adult relations, increased community planning, and increased community perceptions that youth can make positive contributions.¹⁹

Youth-to-Youth Connections

Reduce Stereotypes through Repeated Interactions

In order to counteract the negative stereotypes that develop about groups during conflict through segregation and propaganda, the Twinned Peace Sports Schools run by the Peres Center for Peace brings together Palestinian and Israeli youth. Soccer and basketball are used as conduits to encourage mutual understanding, acceptance of cultural differences and to breakdown negative stereotyping between youth. This model for interaction differs from many other sports for peace programming in that the youth from each side of the conflict meet multiple times a week in separate groups to work on stereotypes and cultural differences and then every three weeks these groups meet with their respective Palestinian and Israeli counterparts to solidify the reconciliation skills they have learned. As a result of these sports schools, youth participants are able to see the potential for peace in the midst of a protracted conflict, even when they and family members are being directly affected by the conflict. For example, after the Gaza War in late 2008, the program was able to restart

¹⁷ <http://www.ndi.org/kenya>, <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/topics/pubs/Final%20-%20Youth%20and%20Politics.pdf>

¹⁸ Wessels, M & Monteiro, C. (2006). Psychosocial Assistance for Youth: Toward Reconstruction for Peace in Angola. *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 62 (1) pp. 121-139.

¹⁹ Mercy Corps has two programs that provide psychosocial support: Comfort for Kids, which targets young children, and Moving Forward, which targets youth. Neither of these programs, however, has been implemented in a conflict setting with youth (15-24).

only weeks after the violence ended, with the youth eager to resume activities, including activities that brought Palestinians and Israelis together.²⁰

Provide Youth Alternative Models to Violence to Change Social Norms

Recent research suggests that targeting social norms (i.e., socially accepted definitions of how people should behave) may be more effective than targeting personal beliefs in reducing youth violence. Additionally, social interactions, as opposed to individual education, are more powerful agents of reducing prejudiced behavior.²¹ Search For Common Ground's programs target both norms and behavior through interactive media and role models to teach youth how to resolve conflicts non-violently. The Génération Grands Lacs (The Great Lakes Generation) radio program, which is simulcasted in Rwanda, Burundi and eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), is co-hosted by two youth journalists from two different countries on a rotating basis. The programs are comprised of pre-produced interviews, reporting packages, portraits, sketches, and testimonies, which complement live Q&A sessions with studio guests and interactive discussions with calls from listeners. The radio programs' themes target norms, while having youth co-hosts from different countries demonstrate how youth can work together across conflict lines.²² Similarly in the DRC, the Participatory Theatre for Conflict incorporates Forum Theatre techniques to teach conflict transformation. This methodology has proven effective in changing the ways that youth deal with conflict by offering a venue to practice positively transforming a conflict and thus lowering the likelihood of violence as a result of that conflict. During the performance, members of the audience are invited to 'replace' the actors to play out the scenario in ways that more constructively address the conflicts. SFCG's participatory theatre work was awarded the Ashoka-Changemakers 2006 award for 'Innovative on-the-ground strategies for conflict transformation'.²³

²⁰ <http://www.peres-center.org/SectionProject.asp?cc=01160201>

²¹ Puck, Elizabeth. (2009). What's in a Norm? Sources and Process of Norm Changes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96(3), 594-600. <http://betsylevypaluck.com/Paluck%202009%20JPSP%20Norm.pdf>

²² http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/rwanda/programmes_rwanda.html

²³ http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/drcongo/drcongo_toolbox.html

Mercy Corps

Youth and Conflict Management

Curriculum Overview



Photograph: Miguel Samper for Mercy Corps

Curriculum Approach

The purpose of the Youth and Conflict Management facilitator's manual is to provide trainers and facilitators with comprehensive guidelines for how to teach negotiation and conflict management to youth. Each lesson contains exercises, activities, and a recommended script (in italics). This curriculum has been developed to teach youth the necessary steps of the negotiation process as an alternative to violence. The curriculum contains 10 lessons, plus a supplement on Cross Cultural Negotiation, which we believe provide a comprehensive set of information regarding the steps of the negotiation process, as well as other related topics such as managing emotions, consensus building, and reconciliation.

There is a Monitoring and Evaluation section with questions to assess learning for each of the modules. This includes a list of M&E questions (1-3 per lesson) that could be asked in a pre-survey and/or a post-survey. Questions include multiple-choice, true-false, strongly disagree to strong agree, and open ended. Facilitators may create a survey with all or some of these questions to gauge the effectiveness of their lessons.

Curriculum Development

To create this curriculum, we synthesized and adapted CMG tools for younger populations, and specifically, low-literacy populations. The manual brings together the Program for Young Negotiators, the Youth Initiatives for Peace and Reconciliation peacebuilding manual used in Nepal and Timor Leste, the Localizing Institutional Capacity in Sudan peacebuilding manual, and the MC Staff Development Negotiation and Communication curriculum. We also integrated these lessons into the Sports for Change curriculum used in Kenya and Sri Lanka (see <https://clearspace.mercycorps.org/docs/DOC-9898>).

Lesson Descriptions

When designing a workshop/training, you can pick and choose among the lessons summarized below. Almost all the lessons can be used separately. The full curriculum can be found on the Mercy Corps Digital Library:

<https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsd/cgi-bin/goindex?c=progdev&q=Subject::Youth::Training,CurriculumWorkshopMaterials::YouthCurriculum::ConflictManagement>

Lesson 1: Competition, Collaboration and Negotiation

Talking about and working through difficult issues is not always an easy thing to do, especially when people do not trust the each other, are unsure of how they will respond, and they feel like the issue is a win-lose situation (a situation where more for me means less for you). Learning to negotiate is about learning how to discuss one's thoughts and points of view with another person and through that discussion, find a solution that is beneficial to both parties. This session will help participants see that negotiation is a skill and that approaching negotiation as an opportunity to collaborate instead of competing is a practical way to resolve problems.

Lesson 2: Conflict Analysis

Most of people deal with conflict every day. Some conflicts grow quickly and cause arguments, anger, and even violence. Other conflicts occur on a much smaller scale — people feel tense around each other and are not able to cooperate, but there are fewer visible signs of tensions. Participants will learn how to resolve existing conflict and avoid future conflict by understanding the factors that contribute to conflict — what connects and divides people, who the actors are, and what people care about. This section introduces two tools for conflict analysis: Connectors and Dividers and the Problem Tree.

Lesson 3a: Communication-Perceptions and Intent vs. Effect

The ability to communicate clearly is an extremely important yet difficult skill to develop. Learning to communicate well means understanding different perspectives, listening to others' thoughts in an active way, and communicating one's own thoughts clearly and specifically. Through four different exercises (Blind Men and the Elephant, Old Woman/Young Woman, Tea Party, and Listening to Understand), participants will learn and practice good communication techniques. This session will also help participants see that good communication has an important impact on developing peaceful and beneficial relationships between individuals and/or groups.

Lesson 3b: Cross Cultural Communication

Miscommunication is a major cause of conflict, particularly miscommunication that stems from different perceptions and backgrounds. For this reason, conflict often occurs between people from different cultures

who have different points of view and different life experiences. To avoid this cross-cultural conflict, participants will learn how to use communication skills, such as Active Listening, when communicating across different cultures. To illustrate the problems that occur during cross cultural communication, there is one exercise, “Front of the Room”.

Lesson 4: Moving from Positions to Interests and Win/Win Outcomes

Interests are how we explain the reasons why we want something. They are the underlying needs or concerns that motivate our demands. Interests can often be expressed by answering the question “why do I want that?” Positions are people’s demands and they often hide interests. Positions are just one way that we believe we can satisfy our interests. In this session, participants will learn to differentiate between positions and interests, and move towards a win/win outcome that satisfies all parties involved. Facilitators will help youth understand the difference between positions and interests using examples from the youth’s lives.

Lesson 5: Brainstorming and Selecting Options

The final step in our negotiation process is developing a solution. To do this, people need to brainstorm a list of potential options and then select an option from that list. Remember that while positions only have one solution or option, interests have many possible solutions or options. In this session, participants will learn how to brainstorm a list of potential options-- be creative and innovative by not judging, interrupting, disrespecting or rejecting anyone’s ideas. After youth learn brainstorming, they will discuss how to choose among the options, by selecting one that satisfies the parties’ interests, is fair, and can be implemented.

Lesson 6: Role Play – Two Villages

In this session, participants will have the opportunity to practice the various skills in a mock negotiation. Participants will focus on the negotiation framework-communication, relationship, interests, and options, with the hope of reaching a good agreement. After preparing their roles, participants will take part in a negotiation with partners and then review the process, noting what went well and what to do differently in the future.

Lesson 7: Managing Emotions

It can be difficult to manage emotions in a healthy way. Conflicts, in particular, tend to bring out emotions — anger, hurt, disappointment, insult, etc. As a result, people often want to “get back” at those who hurt them by yelling, storming off, striking or attacking — either verbally or physically. Typical responses, in return, create difficult emotions in others and the conflict quickly escalates. Sometimes people turn their emotions inward and allow feelings of hopelessness, fear, inadequacy, or other emotions to “eat away” at or get them down, producing depression, extreme guilt, or even suicidal thoughts. This lesson helps the participants identify common emotions and then allows the group to discuss different ways to respond to them during a negotiation.

Lesson 8: Reconciliation, Trust and Forgiveness

Sometimes when people negotiate or deal with a conflict, tempers rise, feelings are hurt, or relationships are damaged. We try to avoid these negative consequences, but it’s important to learn skills that can help us mend these problems if they do occur — how to apologize and how to forgive. Forgiveness and the process of reconciliation can be difficult as people become attached to their hurts. However, without anger serving as a distraction, the two parties are more likely to work together towards peaceful solutions to conflict. Maintaining strong relationships built on trust can help make these processes easier and more lasting. In this session, participants will discuss trust using an exercise, how to rebuild trust once it has been broken, and how to promote forgiveness and reconciliation.

Lesson 9: Mediation

Mediation is a helpful tool for resolving problems when people can't solve the conflict themselves. A mediator helps the conflicting parties use the tools learned in the earlier sessions, such as active listening, identifying underlying interests and brainstorming options. Mediators often are important when the two parties are having trouble communicating on their own, whether because of anger, a language barrier, or other issues. A mediator asks pointed questions to help each party understand the other's point of view and employ win/win negotiation techniques. In this session, participants will have the opportunity to apply the negotiation framework in a mediation role play.

Lesson 10: Consensus Building

Consensus building is the process of bringing a group of people together to express their ideas, clarify areas of agreement and disagreement, and develop shared solutions. It is similar to mediation as there is someone facilitating the process, but with more than two parties. Consensus building is useful for strengthening relationships and trust, and building local ownership for solutions and their implementation. However, it takes time and may be difficult when there is a weak relationship between people and people are not comfortable sharing interests and exploring options. In this session, the facilitator will introduce consensus building using an exercise and then discuss the various steps for building consensus.

Mercy Corps

Youth and Conflict

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guide

The below tool was designed for a Youth and Conflict Assessment in Pakistan. While many of the questions will need contextualization, the themes and issues relevant in Pakistan have also emerged in other countries where Mercy Corps implements Youth and Conflict programs—Kenya, Yemen, Kosovo, Tajikistan and others.

Theme	Question
Session Introduction	1 Have each person in the group introduce themselves by name and where they are from. Or as an ice breaker have each person state their name and share their hobby or game.
	2 Do you think in general that [Name Country/Location] is making progress in development? Yes No
	3 In your area, what are the ways (including indigenous ways) young people <u>positively contribute</u> to the development?
Broad Development Context	4 In your area, what are the most significant development challenges? Pick the top 2. Education Employment/Economic Opportunities Governance/corruption Elitism/lack of participation Healthcare Other
	5 In your area, what is the role of the government and local councils in development?

Theme	Question
Youth and Economic Opportunities	6 In your area, do you feel that young people today have more job opportunities than their parents did as youth? Yes No
	7 Do you feel young people's education prepares youth for work/employment? Why or why not?
	8 In your area, are employment opportunities increasing, about the same, decreasing? Improving About the same Decreasing
	9 Does having an education improve young people's ability to find work/ Yes No
	10 Do young people migrate to find work? If so, where? Y/N Elsewhere in [Name Location/Country] [Name Nearby/Most Common Countries Youth Migrate To] [Name Other Common Countries Youth Migrate To] Other countries
	11 How do young people learn about employment opportunities? From family/friends At school/university Paper/websites Other_(name)_____

Theme	Question
Youth & Political Engagement	12 In your area, do you feel that young people are heard by the local government? Yes No
	13 What various local conflicts in your area? How do people resolve most conflicts? Go to an elder Go to the police Discuss it between themselves Fight it out to see who wins Other _____ How do people resolve the most difficult conflicts? Go to an elder Go to the police Discuss it between themselves Fight it out to see who wins Other _____
	14 How well do you believe the government understands youth's concerns? Completely Quite a bit Somewhat Not at all

Theme	Question
Youth & Community Engagement	15 In your area, how do young people spend their free time? Sports Helping the family (farm/household chores) Volunteering Attending youth groups Attending the mosque Fishing Tourism Religious Preaching Other _____
	16 Who do young people use as examples for their lives? Who do they go to with problems or for advice? Check all that apply Parents Religious leaders Peers Celebrity (named it) Elders Teachers Others _____
	Who they go with problems/advice Parents Religious leaders Peers Teachers Elders Others
	17 In your community, what are the barriers that young people face that prevent them from getting involved in local decision-making?
	18 How do young people gain status in the community? Name the top two Job Education Marriage Property Other

Theme	Question
Youth & Conflict Management	19 In your area, do you feel that there has been an increase or decrease of violence or conflict in the last two years? Increase About the same Decrease
	20 In your area, do young people play a role in managing conflicts? If yes, how? If not why not?
	21 In your area, how do young people contribute to conflict?
	22 Are there instances when violence is acceptable? If yes, what are those circumstances? a) Fight on land rights b) To protect their honor c) Religious differences d) Other specify
Conclusion	23 In your community, what are the most effective ways to raise awareness about the role of youth in development? How can the environment be improved to enable youth to participate in the development of their communities?

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You must be the change
 you wish to see in the world.

~ Gandhi

YOUTH AS A FORCE FOR PEACEFUL CHANGE

Youth can be powerful advocates for positive change. However, few economic opportunities, little political influence and a lack of status in their communities often contribute to situations where young people believe they have few options to improve their lives and make their voices heard. These factors, compounded with a longer transition between adolescence and adulthood, little sense of purpose or direction, and a need for belonging, increase the risk that political elites and extremist groups can manipulate young people to join violent movements.

Mercy Corps engages young people economically, politically and socially to reduce their incentives to participate in violence. Our holistic approach helps young people successfully transition to adulthood and capitalize on their potential to create a better life for themselves and their communities. Since the late 1990s, Mercy Corps has implemented 95 peacebuilding programs in 30 war-torn countries. With 28 youth programs, we're helping young people develop the capacities and opportunities to become agents of peaceful change and to bring sustainable development to their communities.

Africa

In **Kenya**, Mercy Corps works to promote peace and reconciliation in two districts in the Rift Valley that were deeply affected by election-related violence. Through Local Empowerment for Peace (LEAP), young people find ways to build a more constructive political and economic future. To date, LEAP has trained 408 people in conflict management, strengthened 12 peacebuilding structures and facilitated 35 events to increase understanding and mitigate violence between groups. LEAP also supported the formation of 15 youth self-help groups, which have implemented cash-for-work projects in 15 sites.

In **Liberia**, Mercy Corps' Youth Education for Life Skills (YES) program reintegrated war-affected youth, including ex-combatants and IDPs, back into their communities after a protracted civil war. Through life skills training, such as literacy, conflict resolution and leadership, 13,000 young people in 358 communities learned to address adversity in a

more logical and constructive way. Participants implemented 120 community development projects, including brickmaking, well digging, and sporting events, to demonstrate positive leadership to community members. Three years after the program, participants remarked that its greatest success was the reintegration of war-affected youth through multiple opportunities for interaction with each other and their communities. Youth also reported that instead of resorting to violence, they now resolve conflict peacefully either through dialogue or asking elders for assistance.



Liberian girls learn about health through Mercy Corps' sports program. Photo: Cassandra Nelson/Mercy Corps

Asia

In **Nepal**, Mercy Corps has worked to reduce the likelihood of violence reemerging after a 10-year civil war. Youth Initiatives for Peace and Reconciliation (YIPR) helped build relationships between youth from different ethnic groups and castes and strengthen ties between youth and their communities, making them less vulnerable to being recruited by military groups. We mobilized 32,622 youth into 820 multi-ethnic Village Youth Clubs and provided them with the negotiation, mediation and consensus-building skills that allow them to resolve conflicts peacefully. By the end of the program, youth were 94% more likely to resolve conflicts through non-violent means, more likely to be an active part of their communities through participation in community decision-making bodies, and 43% more likely to interact with youth from different backgrounds.

Balkans and Eurasia

Through Support for **Kosovo's** Young Leaders

Last year, Mercy Corps helped 16.7 million people turn crisis into opportunity.

(SKYL), Mercy Corps provides young Kosovo Serbs and Albanians with the skills they need to acknowledge and address fundamental ethnic and political differences, while finding ways to build a peaceful future. SKYL helps young people gain job skills, work experience and employment opportunities through internships and apprenticeships. Of the first 400 participants, 135 have found full-time work. Young people are re-engaging with their communities by implementing 15 community service projects. SKYL also is building a multi-ethnic network of 1,345 young negotiators who can identify projects that bring young Serbs and Albanians together to pursue common interests.

The **Tajikistan** Conflict Prevention Program (TCPP) reduced vulnerability and hopelessness among disenfranchised youth in the Tavildara region of Tajikistan. TCPP supported 218 young people with opportunities to interact, learn skills and engage in healthy and positive activities through 20 coed youth committees. As a result of these community building efforts and increased dialogue with the local government, youth helped provide water to nearly 4,000 individuals and electricity to 1,900 individuals. Additionally, police officials from the Tavildara region reported a 70% decrease in crime during TCPP, with fewer reports of youth involved in conflicts.

Middle East

In the Middle East, where 65% of the population is under 30, isolation and exposure to anti-Western propaganda often intensifies polarization that lures young people into extremist movements. Mercy Corps counters negative influences by operating a multi-country online engagement initiative and leadership training program linking young people in **Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon** and **Gaza** with their peers in the US and Scotland. Now in its seventh year, Global Citizen Corps (www.globalcitizencorps.org) harnesses the power of online discussions, live video exchanges, face-to-face meetings and advocacy to inspire leaders to mobilize their peers to make a positive difference in the world. In the past six months, 1,000 youth leaders across continents engaged over 25,000 others in global citizenship education and community action projects, reaching 10 million people. Moreover, these efforts have transformed the way these

youth leaders see their role in society. The GCC will expand its reach to include youth in **Pakistan** and **Indonesia** in Spring 2010.



Young women in a West Bank school built by Mercy Corps learn computer skills. Photo: Thatcher Cook for Mercy Corps

Sports for Change

Mercy Corps uses the convening power of sport to attract disenfranchised youth who often have low literacy, little inclination to join classroom-based conflict management training, and increased risk for participating in violence. Our Nike-supported programs in **Sri Lanka** and **Kenya** help 2,000 young people resist the manipulations of political leaders and violent groups through social integration across lines of conflict; encourage them to believe in a shared future; and create an opportunity to build relationships. Through our sports-based conflict management curriculum, we teach youth the negotiation and communication skills they need to resolve problems and build relationships for a peaceful future.

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Be the change